

Director's report to the Fish and Wildlife Commission
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A Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife

We serve Washington's citizens by protecting, restoring, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats, while providing sustainable fish and wildlife-related recreational and commercial opportunities.

GOAL I: HEALTHY AND DIVERSE FISH AND WILDLIFE POPULATIONS AND HABITATS DEVELOP, INTEGRATE AND DISSEMINATE SOUND FISH, WILDLIFE AND HABITAT SCIENCE.

An Assessment of Spotted Owl Habitat on Non-federal Lands in Washington Between 1996 and 2004: The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in collaboration with Washington Department of Natural Resources recently completed an analysis documenting changes in the amount of spotted owl habitat on state and private lands between 1996 and 2004. Results from this analysis were reported this August to the Forest Practices Board (FPB) as part of their review of the spotted owl Forest Practices Rules the FPB adopted in 1996. The study area included all forested lands, within the spotted owl range, impacted by state forest practice regulations. It included 392 owl circles and totaled 3,144,112 acres. The study found that approximately 179,000 total acres of forest were harvested on the study area from 1996-2004. An estimated 33% (59,000 acres) of the harvested lands also met spotted owl habitat conditions as defined by the Forest Practice Rules. Most of the harvested spotted owl habitat was on private (76%) and state (17%) lands. We estimated that 30% (21,000 acres) of the total harvest inside of areas designated for spotted owl conservation was in spotted owl habitat. In addition, an estimated 39% of the 21,000 acres of habitat harvested during 1996-2004 occurred inside of known owl management circles. Given the results of our study and considering the ongoing decline of spotted owl populations, we make the following recommendations: (1) long-term landscape planning should be encouraged; and (2) high quality, spatially accurate habitat maps should be developed and used.

Sturgeon Project: The Green Sturgeon Project wrapped up their third summer season. Since research on this little known species began in July 2003, the project has caught 671 green sturgeon, to which 659 were PIT and spaghetti tagged, 109 were implanted with acoustic tags, and 9 had pop-off satellite archival tags attached. Over 700 genetic samples have been taken from green sturgeon caught in test fisheries and commercial fisheries in the three coastal estuaries (Columbia River, Willapa Bay, and Grays Harbor). Additionally, the project has collected samples and data for sexual maturation, toxicology, age/growth, and dietary studies.

Third Nearshore Science and Shoreline Management Guidance Meeting: On July 26, 2005, the Department hosted a meeting of state, federal, and local government representatives to discuss furtherance of the Nearshore Science and Shoreline Guidance Project. At the meeting, the Washington Sea Grant Program, from the University of Washington, gave a presentation outlining its program and how it might be utilized as a means of compiling and synthesizing the Nearshore Science, as well as

acting as a vehicle to present the science to local governments for their use in updating their critical areas ordinances under the Growth Management Act and their Shoreline Master Programs under the Shoreline Management Act. A meeting will be held in the future with members of the state agencies and local governments to further refine a vision statement and a scope of work for this project.

PROTECT, RESTORE, AND ENHANCE FISH AND WILDLIFE POPULATIONS AND THEIR HABITATS.

Illegal Salmon Activity at Canada / U.S. Border: While conducting a routine wholesale dealer inspection, WDFW found about 500 lbs. of sockeye with no documentation showing origin. The employees said that the fish were from the Frazer River in B.C. and were delivered by a Canadian who they knew only as Romeo. WDFW contacted Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans (CDFO) counterparts and found that there have not been any sockeye fisheries on the Frazer this year where sale is allowed. They knew Romeo as an outlaw from the Hope, B.C. area and they were very interested in any information WDFW could provide regarding his illegal sale of sockeye. Due to the potential Lacey Act violations and border nexus, WDFW Officers worked with NMFS Special Agent (S/A) Brubaker to place a flag on Romeo's border crossings at U.S. Customs.

The next day, U.S. Customs advised that Romeo had crossed the border with a large quantity of salmon and had declared the fish as non-commercial. WDFW Officers and NMFS S/A Brubaker waited as Romeo illegally sold another 200 lbs. of salmon to the wholesale dealer. When contacted, Romeo admitted that he had caught the fish and that he knew it was illegal for him to sell the fish. WDFW cited Romeo for unlawful wholesale dealer activities and for no transportation tickets while Officer Beauchene completed follow up at the fish buyer. As Romeo crossed back into B.C., CDFO Officers arrested him on their charges and seized his vehicle. It turns out he had made eight previous deliveries. Lacey Act and additional State charges are under investigation.

School Fire: The School Fire started August 5, 2005, on the Wooten Wildlife Area in the Blue Mountains of Southeast Washington. The fire was caused from a tree falling on a power line. The fire was contained August 19, 2005, after burning over 51,000 acres including about 90% of the Wooten Wildlife Area. The fire burned moderately to severely hot in many areas and consumed most of the timber and range resources on the wildlife area, in addition to 14 miles of elk fence and over 30 miles of boundary fence. The fire also destroyed approximately 200 structures on adjacent private lands, including many summer homes and cabins.

Efforts are underway to rebuild the elk fence and rehabilitate severely burned areas to reduce erosion into the Tucannon Watershed. A supplemental budget request of \$2.9 million is being submitted to replace fences lost in the fire. A supplemental budget request of \$850,000 is also being submitted to cover the cost of fire suppression, rehabilitation, and coordination with landowners to address elk damage on private lands.

The department is preparing to salvage timber as soon as possible and is working on SEPA and NEPA requirements (the Wooten Wildlife Area is a Federal Aid Project and subject to NEPA), so that timber

can be removed within the next 6 months. Most of the salvaged timber will likely be removed by helicopter. We are coordinating fire recovery efforts with the USFS, DNR, and adjacent private landowners.

Baker River Hydroelectric Project: Staff from the Fish and Habitat programs worked with Steve Keller (Drought Coordinator) to address the loss of spawning and rearing facilities due to low flows in the Baker River. Because of the low flows in the Baker River this summer, we could not put sockeye salmon in the upper artificial sockeye spawning beaches. There was insufficient water for holding the adults. Normally, 500+ sockeye would be placed in one of the upper beaches and allowed to spawn. The eggs would incubate and then the fish would rear in the artificial beach before migrating to Baker Lake. With funding from the drought program, we were able to order rearing containers, which will be used for short-term rearing of some young sockeye from another Baker River sockeye spawning and incubation facility prior to their release into Baker Lake. This will allow us to match the normal emigration timing of the upper spawning beaches, which will better match the plankton production timing in Baker Lake.

Canadian Fishers in Violation: WDFW Marine Officers from three Marine Detachments participated in an event organized by WDFW Sergeants in order to eradicate illegal commercial Canadian crab fishing gear deployed on the wrong side of the Border. Other agencies that had vital roles included Officers with the Department of Fisheries of Oceans - Canada, Lummi Indian Nation, Tulalip Indian Tribe, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Coast Guard and Agents with the National Marine Fisheries Service. The law enforcement "Armada" involved eight patrol vessels from all agencies. Video surveillance was used to capture the illegal fishing activities across the Border, and then an undercover vessel was deployed to bring Officers close the targets. Chase boats stood by until initial contacts were made. Unfortunately, the suspects were still wary after a law enforcement strike from the week before, and slipped back across the line before arrests were made. Still, four boats were involved in illegal fishing and could be positively identified. WDFW officers searched a marina in Canada with the Canadian Officers, located all suspects (8 persons), and interviewed them. Canadian authorities seized their catches. WDFW will file criminal charges along with Canada. Patrol vessels then set to work seizing gear. About 200 crab pots were seized by participating agencies. The cooperation between law enforcement agencies was second to none.

Triton Cove Clam Enhancement: A total of 126,000 hatchery-reared Manila clam "seed" was planted at Triton Cove WDFW Tidelands. This seeding will help maintain the recreational clam fishery at this popular public beach. Assistance was also provided to the Puget Sound Restoration Fund staff with collecting Olympia oyster broodstock from Triton Cove. This native broodstock will be held at a private shellfish hatchery, where it will produce oyster seed for restoration work at Belfair State Park this coming year.

30-Fathom Recreational Bottomfish Closure: The Department prohibited the retention of all bottomfish, including lingcod, westward of a line approximating 30 fathoms, effective August 5, to slow down the catch rate of canary rockfish. Canary rockfish are one of eight overfished groundfish stocks that are managed under rebuilding plans by the Pacific Fishery Management Council. The Pacific Council has adopted harvest guidelines for canary rockfish for state recreational fisheries to ensure that rebuilding

goals are met. Management measures to achieve these rebuilding goals include prohibiting the retention of canary rockfish in recreational fisheries to encourage conservation of the stock and discourage targeting by anglers. However, canary rockfish are caught incidentally while anglers are targeting other species of bottomfish. Through the Department's Ocean Sampling Program we collect catch data, including released catch information. Because canary rockfish have a swim bladder and are typically caught at deeper depths, there is a high mortality factor associated with this incidental catch. The rate of incidental catch of canary rockfish is higher this year as compared to last year and the Washington recreational fishery is projected to achieve, and may exceed, the harvest guideline adopted by the Pacific Council. In order to manage to this harvest guideline, the Department committed to take in-season action to prohibit fishing for bottomfish seaward of a line approximating the 30-fathom depth contour in an effort to slow down the catch rate of canary rockfish. This regulatory action is a follow-through on that commitment. Even though this action is necessary to reduce the canary catch rate, it is important to note that much of the area where Washington anglers fish will still remain open to bottomfish fishing.

Instream Flow Rule Adoptions: Ten new instream flow rules are in the pipeline for adoption into WAC in the next several months. After a hiatus in new rule adoptions of nearly 20 years, this represents a significant step forward for stream flow protection in those basins. Department staff continue to work closely with Ecology and others to support this process and to provide the science for meeting fish needs in these rules. The Entiat (WRIA 46) instream flow rule was adopted earlier in September and the Stillaguamish (WRIA 5) CR 103 was signed by Ecology's Director the first week of September.

Coastal Recreational Halibut: At the Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting in September, the Council approved the Department's proposed recreational changes to the Halibut Catch Sharing Plan for public review. These changes included:

- 1) A proposed statewide annual bag limit for halibut of five fish per angler; 2) Modifying the North Coast (Neah Bay and La Push) May season from five consecutive days per week (Tuesday-Saturday) to three staggered days (Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday);
- 3) Specifying the North Coast June fishery to open the first Thursday after June 17 (rather than the third week in June);
- 4) Modifying the North Coast June season to two staggered days per week (Thursday, Saturday);
- 5) Specifying that the South Coast (Westport) fishery will be open in the northern nearshore area only on Fridays and Saturdays beginning July 1;
- 6) Modifying the northern nearshore area by moving the western boundary shoreward and extending the southern boundary south by about two miles; and

7) Allowing the retention of all bottomfish, except rockfish, in the Columbia River area with a halibut onboard (currently only sablefish are allowed). IRM staff will brief the Fish and Wildlife Commission on these proposals at the October meeting and will hold a public meeting on October 10 to solicit further input on these proposals. The Pacific Council is scheduled to consider these proposals for final approval at its meeting the week of Oct. 30.

Lands Vision: "Lands Vision 20/20: A Clear Vision For The Future" has been published and distributed to key legislators, the Fish and Wildlife Commission, agency personnel, and agency partners including the many individuals and groups who reviewed the document and provided input. Lands 20/20 articulates the department's vision for future land acquisition and management, and is the culmination of 2 years of efforts by the department with broad internal and external review.

Diverse entities such as the Washington Farm Bureau, the Washington Association of Counties, the Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Hunters Heritage Council, and the Washington Conservation Commission participated in an external focus group that helped shape this vision.

The Vision: "Protecting our unique quality of life by maintaining a citizen supported portfolio of land to sustain Washington's diverse fish and wildlife and their habitats into the next century" reflects the department's long history of land acquisition for fish and wildlife conservation and related recreation. It also identifies the need for the department to work cooperatively with the public and local communities to build support for fish and wildlife lands and future acquisitions.

The publication further defines the lands vision as: Providing benefits to fish and wildlife, providing benefits to the public, and ensuring operational excellence (stewardship) on our lands. The vision is derived from our legislative mandate, our mission, and our strategic plan, and will guide department decision-making on future land acquisitions and management. We are currently developing an internal policy and procedure that implements the principles of Lands 20/20.

Drought Response: Several north Puget Sound Rivers recorded record high flows for September 30, but the rain did little for southwest and eastern Washington streamflows. However, we appear to be at a good period of at least partial rain and cooler temperatures, so we may be back to "normal" soon. The drought team has been busy planning projects, obtaining permits, and monitoring past projects and current fish passage conditions. Several projects are in the works, including Kalama River, Washougal River, Hamilton Creek, Hardy Creek, Duncan Creek, South Fork Nooksack, Dungeness River, Klickitat River, and Gray Wolf River. In addition, staff responded to a still-developing low flow situation in the Cle Elum River.

Apparently, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) over-drafted the Cle Elum Lake reservoir down to nearly dead storage (i.e., no flows past the dam), with the expectation that fall flows would be sufficient to provide adequate flows for spring chinook redds in the Cle Elum River downstream of the dam. That did not happen, so without some intervention by the BOR, several hundred-spring chinook redds in the Cle

Elum and Yakima Rivers are at high risk of complete or partial dewatering and loss. The Department is preparing to assist with the costs of pumping water from the reservoir to maintain adequate streamflows over the redds to ensure their viability.

ENSURE WDFW ACTIVITIES, PROGRAMS, FACILITIES, AND LANDS ARE CONSISTENT WITH LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS THAT PROTECT AND RECOVER FISH, WILDLIFE, AND THEIR HABITATS.

#1248 Permit Renewal: Fish Management staff within Region 2 and headquarters submitted the renewal application for permit #1248. The renewal permit application includes fisheries on non-listed species in the middle and upper Columbia River region to include the Columbia River summer chinook, Icicle River spring chinook, Methow River trout, Lake Wenatchee sockeye, mainstem sturgeon, bass and walleye fisheries. These activities have been permitted since 1999, but the renewal application met some resistance on the part of NOAA Fisheries as it relates to perceived impacts to listed spring chinook and summer steelhead that WDFW needed to more fully address within the renewal application. During the past year, WDFW and NOAA Fisheries staff have worked closely to produce an application that meets WDFW's interest of expanding fisheries while remaining within the original ESA incidental take limits, and meeting NOAA Fisheries conservation responsibilities. This renewal application would also potentially provide some spring chinook fishing opportunity in the Entiat River should NOAA Fisheries authorize all activities within the application. The lower Entiat River has been closed to all fishing since the ESA listing of steelhead in 1997. We continue to expand opportunities to fish where and when it is consistent with recovery and we can manage the impact levels to the ESA listed populations. However, these fisheries take an immense amount of monitoring to ensure compliance.

Marijuana Grow Operation: WDFW worked with the drug task force with logistical support and surveillance on the WDFW Sunnyside Wildlife Area marijuana grow. Drug Agents agreed to work our lands, instead of the normal eradication objectives. This partnership has provided local law enforcement with essential site intelligence, identifying potential suspects and grow operations. The drug task force members decided to eradicate the grow operation with the help of WDFW Officers. Eighteen hundred (1,800) plants on the Sunnyside Wildlife Area and another 150 plants on the Wenas Wildlife Area were eradicated last week with an estimated street value of \$2,000,000.

Compliance Checked in Area Restaurants: All of the marine unit's Clallam/Strait Detachment staff participated in a market emphasis in the Clallam and Jefferson county areas. Five businesses were checked and all were in compliance. WDFW inspected markets & restaurants in Clallam County east of Port Angeles and found everyone to be in compliance. WDFW worked in Port Angeles and found one restaurant with no receipts for halibut and salmon and no certification tags for clams. The manager of the restaurant claimed that the fish came from a wholesale dealer in Sekiu. A follow-up with that wholesale dealer determined that there was never a transaction with that restaurant. We are continuing this investigation.

INFLUENCE THE DECISIONS OF OTHERS THAT AFFECT FISH, WILDLIFE AND THEIR HABITATS.

Threatened Bull Trout, Eagle, And Elk Habitat Saved: Former Regional Habitat Program Manager Steve Manlow worked with Skamania County and a developer to protect threatened bull trout habitat, eagle habitat, and elk winter range on the North Fork Lewis River and its tributaries. Prior to our intervention, the developer was proposing several large developments that would have seriously disrupted all of those habitats. We have reached a mutual agreement with all the parties to protect all of these sensitive resources.

Potential Hood Canal Access Sites Toured: Staff toured potential Hood Canal access sites to replace the Hood Canal Bridge access with the Lands Program and WSDOT. Because the new bridge will no longer accommodate a fishing access for several reasons, mostly related to post-911 security issues and the impossibility of practical ADA access, WDFW and WSDOT are partnering to find and construct a replacement access site. The most promising site would use part of the west end work trestle, connected to the shore with the surplus grated WSDOT transfer spans, to provide deep water fishing access adjacent to the west bridge abutment and on both sides. The outer line of steel piles would be left in place and decking installed over them, thus removing access to any part of the bridge while still providing fishing and crabbing from all sides. This is already a popular spot for fall salmon fishing from the bank, would be a good crabbing location, and would provide safe, secure ADA accessibility where none exists presently. There is no eelgrass at this site, and the juvenile salmonid migration corridor along the shoreline would be spanned with grating and thus not impacted. The temporary trestle is slated for demolition in November, as the rollover of the bridge is already complete on the west side, so action to develop this idea will need to be swift.

NOAA Workshop: Coastal Shellfish Lead Biologist Dan Ayres was invited on short notice to attend a NOAA workshop titled "Developing a Human Dimensions Research Strategy to Assess and Mitigate Socioeconomic Impacts of Harmful Algal Blooms" in Washington D.C. The meeting brought together a small group to develop a HABs-Human Dimensions research plan that will serve two key functions: 1) Leveraging and guiding human dimensions research to better understand and mitigate social/economic impacts of HABs; and 2) Educating biophysical scientists and fishery managers about the value and methods of human dimensions research for HABs and other coastal management issues. Among the group of 17 were several key members of the HAB research community and several anthropologists and economists who have experience in natural resource issues. Dan was the lone fisheries manager who was able to share WDFW's first-hand experience of managing fisheries around HAB events (especially domoic acid's effects on the razor clam fishery). In the meeting wrap-up, the conference organizer said that "Dan's west coast and on-the-ground perspective was especially invaluable and in high demand among breakout sessions." As a result of the meeting interaction, two of the economists expressed interest in seeking federal funding to look more closely at the economic impacts of HABs on the razor clam fishery in Washington. NOAA covered all associated travel costs.

Tenth Annual Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea: Also known as the "Donut Hole" convention, the meeting was held in Busan, South Korea September 6-9, 2005. The U.S. delegation consisted of about 22 members. Bill Tweit attended from the Department. Pollock resources in the convention waters

continue to be far lower than levels observed in the late 1980's. Both the U.S. and Russia believe that the current levels cannot support fisheries, and voted to continue the moratorium on pollock fishing in convention waters. The other four countries expressed frustration, but under the convention terms, consensus is required before fisheries can be initiated at current population levels. South Korea received permission to conduct trial fisheries this summer with four vessels instead of two. The U.S. hopes that an increased level of trial fishing will satisfy their concerns about the accuracy of the population data.

White House Conservation Conference: Alex Bradbury gave a presentation on Olympia oyster restoration at the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation in St. Louis, Missouri. This project was chosen as one of only thirty conservation projects nationwide to be showcased at the conference. Representatives of the Puget Sound Restoration Fund, Suquamish Tribe, and Taylor Shellfish Company, who are partners with us in the project, also made presentations. Four White House Cabinet members attended the conference, including Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton.

Ocean Policy Working Group: The Ocean Policy Working Group met on September 23 to prioritize issues for recommended immediate action for the first report, due December 31, 2005. Those issues include: 1) ocean research priorities; 2) governance; 3) economic development; 4) sustainable fisheries; 5) aquaculture policy; and 6) coastal energy development. The Department is the lead agency for sustainable fisheries and a co-lead with the Department of Natural Resources on aquaculture policy. The University of Washington has identified graduate students to assist with researching and collating background information on these issues and specific students have been assigned to topic leads. IRM and Fish Program staff will meet to form internal work groups to address these two items for the Governor's report.

MINIMIZE ADVERSE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN HUMANS AND WILDLIFE.

Columbia River Fish Runs and Fisheries: The fall chinook run is tracking less than pre-season expectations, with about 95% of the run over the dam. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) updated the total run to 572,000-fall chinook, including 283,200 upriver brights (URBs). Pre-season forecasts called for a river mouth run size of 671,100-fall chinook, including 354,600 URBs. The upriver chinook run includes the URBs that contain the ESA-listed Snake River fall chinook. Summer steelhead returns are tracking at 95% of the pre-season forecast. In-season run size estimates total 277,800-steelhead at Bonneville Dam. Chinook retention will be prohibited effective October 1 in the Buoy 10 area and in the area from Bonneville Dam upstream to the Highway 395 Bridge near Pasco, Washington. The area between Buoy 10 and Bonneville Dam closed for chinook retention effective September 18. The sport fishery has taken its portion of the allowable impact on fall chinook salmon protected under the federal ESA. The new rules do not affect fishing for other species of salmon or steelhead in the lower river. Commercial fisheries in the Columbia River are complete for the month of September. Limited commercial fisheries may occur once weekly during the first two weeks of October.

Domoic Acid Found in the Inland Waters of Puget Sound: The Washington Department of Health (WDOH) has closed Sequim Bay for recreational and commercial clam and oyster harvest due to the second only reported domoic acid "hit" in inland waters. Test results from Sequim Bay were positive for domoic acid with 36ppm in Manila clams and 30ppm in Pacific oysters. This is also the highest concentration of domoic acid ever found in inland waters.

GOAL II: SUSTAINABLE FISH AND WILDLIFE-RELATED OPPORTUNITIES

PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISH AND WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES COMPATIBLE WITH MAINTAINING HEALTHY FISH AND WILDLIFE POPULATIONS AND HABITATS.

Snagging on the Big Quilcene River: Officers worked an undercover operation on the lower portion of the river. As the officers were walking upstream from the mouth of the river, they observed four anglers fishing in the closed portion of the river. As the officers stood on the riverbank opposite the fishermen, they were warned by the violators not to fish from that side of the river. The fishermen claimed that the river was closed to fishing on that side of the river and that they would get a \$1,000.00 ticket. They laughed and admitted that it was also closed on their side of the river - a small detail. Officers commented that they couldn't get the fish to bite and asked the four fishermen what they were using to catch fish. One of the fishermen replied that the fish didn't bite, and it was much easier to catch them by just snagging. The apparent leader of the snagging gang boasted that he caught 17 fish in one day using that method (snagging) and also used his son's catch record card to record the over limits. At this time the officers identified themselves and cited the suspects.

Much More to the Story: While on boat patrol, Officers encountered a man fishing on a boat with two poles. He was cited and could only display a 2004 license, insisting he had the current one on shore. The officer checked for the new license once on shore, but he did not have one. Officers then ran the man through the computer and found that he was deceased! It turns out the man fishing had used his dead brother's license as his own. The problem with his plan was that he signed the citation for two poles with his real name. Officers found him in the King County Sheriff's Office's mug shot database and signed him up for five separate criminal charges.

Turnbull NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP): Comments were developed for the draft Turnbull NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). The refuge is proposing to develop an elk-hunting plan, based on habitat damage, and allow waterfowl hunting during the youth season. WDFW comments supported the preferred alternative, with modifications to allow limited elk hunting regardless of habitat damage. An interagency meeting to develop the elk-hunting plan is scheduled for late September.

Youth Hunting Weekend: A special youth hunting weekend took place September 17-18, 2005. During this special weekend, youth under the age of 16 were able to hunt waterfowl and upland birds in eastern and western Washington. Reports from the field indicate many youth had good populations of pheasant and quail to hunt in eastern Washington as they took advantage of available mentors from the

Inland Northwest Wildlife Council and other adult hunters. In addition, many youth took advantage of mentor hunts sponsored by volunteers from Fort Lewis, Whidbey Island, and other western Washington pheasant release sites. Youth waterfowl hunters also enjoyed good success in many areas, with participation by volunteers from the Washington Waterfowl Association. Early flights of teal, mallards, and pintails provided most of the action for young hunters in the Columbia Basin and coastal areas.

Puget Sound Crab Fishery Policy: The Fish and Wildlife Commission have formally requested staff provide a review of the Puget Sound Crab Fishery Policy during its January 2006 meeting. The review is in response to recent years' increases in recreational crab catch estimates, the subsequent reduced recreational season duration, and the affect those changes have on the state commercial fishery. In preparation for the January review, staff met with the Puget Sound recreational and commercial advisory groups to identify topics that should be included in the January policy review. A significant difference of opinion expressed by the two advisory groups deals with any potential assessment of the economic composition and impacts made by each fishery. The recreational advisors strongly support the need to present the Commission with economic value information, while the commercial advisors think presenting this information will generate an unfair comparison between the two fishery groups. Commercial advisors also think that economics should not serve as a basis for potential policy decisions regarding allocation. Staff will continue to work with the advisory groups to better define fishery specific economic components that could fairly compare one fishery with the other.

WORK WITH TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS TO ENSURE FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES ARE ACHIEVED

Nooksack Elk Augmentation: Passive Elk Trap: From August 30 through September 1, 2005, and September 13 through September 15, 2005, the Pt. Elliot tribes, in coordination with WDFW staff, attempted to capture elk on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area for relocation to the North Cascades Herd. This is part of a planned augmentation that has been underway since 2003. They were able to capture and translocate two elk, an adult cow, and a yearling cow. Both were in excellent physical shape at capture. Seven cows and three calves were captured earlier in the spring using this same passive trap technique. A drive trap operation is scheduled for October 7 through October 8, 2005, to fill out the remaining quota of 40 to 50 antlerless elk in 2005.

In concert with the augmentation operation on September 28 through September 29, 2005, a WDFW-led elk capture crew successfully captured and radio-collared seven adult bull elk from the Nooksack (North Cascades) elk herd in support of an effort to assess the herd's population characteristics and to develop better population monitoring tools. The seven bulls were added to 45 previously radio-collared cow elk in the Nooksack herd. The bulls were captured via helicopter darting. All were tagged, radio-collared, given antibiotic and vitamin injections, and released. There were no mortalities or injuries among the elk captured. Biologists with the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and the Sauk-Suiattle Tribe also participated on the elk capture team. This was an extremely productive and efficient capture operation under difficult field conditions.

WDFW - Tribal Mass Marking: The Skokomish Tribe has agreed to a schedule of three dates for discussion of Hood Canal hatchery chinook mass marking; September 12, September 26, and October 10. We will meet on each of these days unless another schedule is agreed upon. The agenda for the first session was to discuss the negotiation process and define technical tasks useful to the negotiations. These negotiations are part of an agreed upon process for settlement over disagreement between the Skokomish Tribe and the Department on mass marking of George Adams and Hoodspout Hatchery chinook reached last May. The commitment made by the parties in May was to work diligently toward agreement for the 2005 brood production between August and November 1. The Skokomish Tribe has tended to introduce management issues other than those directly involved with mass marking (e.g., conflicts between recreational fishers and tribal net fishers on the Skokomish River). A technical assignment was made to the tribal and state staffs to analyze the effects of mass marking on treaty fishing opportunity.

IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF WASHINGTON BY PROVIDING DIVERSE, HIGH QUALITY RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES.

Razor Clam Project: The announcement of dates for the October, November and December razor clam openers was released early this week. For details, see the news release at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/do/newreal/release.php?id=sep2705b>. The structure of these openers is a direct result of input we received at the series of five razor clam public meetings. Specifically, those in attendance asked us to consider the possibility of offering some digging opportunities during the period around New Year's Eve 2005. The last time the tide tables allowed such a harvest opener was in 2001 and it was very popular.

We were also asked to try to structure some additional openers at Twin Harbors and Mocrocks to allow for more access to the TAC (total allowable catch) on these beaches. Both Twin Harbors and Mocrocks are smaller beaches that can be very crowded when opened alone. After some discussion during and after the public meetings we have decided that by opening both of these smaller beaches at the same time and at the end of a 3-day period when all beaches had been open we will likely lessen the concerns with over-crowding. As always, these openers are contingent on final marine toxin tests.

The latest levels of domoic acid in razor clam tissue are low, however we have been observing some minor increases in *pseudonitzschia* (the diatom species that can produce domoic acid) in surf zone water samples all along the coast. Because these diatoms populations can grow quickly (given the right environmental conditions) we will be watching this information closely. The first of two required pre-season razor clam tissue sample collections was submitted to the Washington Department of Health on October 3.

Hurricane Katrina's Impacts: The demand for Pacific oysters grown in Washington has reportedly increased in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the Gulf Coast shellfish industry. The value of large oysters sold in Washington has increased 5-10%, while the value of small, shucked oysters has risen from \$28 to \$42 per gallon.

Coastal Dungeness Crab Fishery: Washington Coastal Dungeness crab landings through the end of the 2004-2005 season (September 15, 2005) reached 25,028,273 pounds (preliminary). Non-treaty fishers caught 20,427,663 and treaty fishers caught 4,600,610. Washington's 2004-2005 total landings surpassed the previous high landings of 22.8 million pounds for the 2002-03 season. Washington's coastal Dungeness crab landings for the 2003-2004 season totaled 19.3 million pounds. Oregon's Dungeness crab landings for 2004-2005 surpassed their record season total of 24 million pounds last season by almost 10 million pounds, reaching 34 million pounds by the end of the season. Dungeness crab landings in California reached 24 million pounds for the 2004-2005 season for a coast wide total over 83 million pounds.

GOAL III: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE PROVIDE EXCELLENT PROFESSIONAL SERVICE.

Illegal Taxidermist Operation: Officers executed a search warrant on an illegal taxidermist in Alger. Officers have been monitoring the taxidermist's activities and completed multiple undercover transactions during the past 8 months. In addition to confirming the original information regarding the subject performing taxidermy without a license, Officer's undercover work revealed multiple counts of possessing protected wildlife. Many of the protected animal mounts were for sale and, in fact, the state purchased a mountain goat. WDFW obtained a full confession and detailed written statement from the suspect. USFWS was also on scene and the suggestion of federal charges proved helpful in gaining the suspect's cooperation. Taxidermied cougar, deer, and bobcat, as well as boxes and boxes of big game hides were noted. A stack of records and photographs, along with wildlife ranging from hummingbirds to owls, were all seized. At least a dozen charges are forthcoming which should make a dent in the \$27,000.00 in cash the suspect had at his residence.

Purse Seiner Emphasis Patrol: Officers put together an emphasis patrol to monitor the Area 7 Fraser River commercial salmon fishery. Officers were dropped off at 5 points of land to conduct surveillance and videotape violations related to this Federal fishery. Officers observed and videotaped a purseseiner failing to brail. A WDFW Sergeant videotaped and observed two different purse seiners failing to brail, and one closed season (failed to use brailer and recovery box in portion of season requiring active recovery box). Officers then proceeded up to Pt. Roberts and citations were issued to both vessels. A very successful patrol with the message that "you are being watched" sent out to the purseseiner fleet.

IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF WDFW'S OPERATIONAL AND SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

Cooperative Effort With City of Renton: A two-day joint emphasis patrol with Renton Police Department and Detachment 10 (King County) officers on the Cedar River resulted in numerous contacts and a few citations. WDFW Officers and Renton officers contacted a couple of fishermen who had kept a 22" and a 20" rainbow taken from the river. Several alcohol-related contacts were made. More important than the contacts and citations that were issued was the fact that Renton officers got to ride along with WDFW

Enforcement and see first hand what we do. Renton Police Chief Anderson was very pleased to have this joint patrol happen in his city.

RECRUIT, DEVELOP AND RETAIN A DIVERSE WORKFORCE WITH HIGH PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS.

Recreation Customer Service Center: Staff has been hired to develop a WDFW Recreation Customer Service Center. The Recreation Customer Service Center will: manage telephone recreation license sales, customer service calls for WDFW, service disability applications, and general inquiries related to fish and wildlife recreation activities. Todd Williams will supervise the Recreation Customer Service Center. Todd has several years of experience in inventory management and customer service with the military.

DEVELOP INFORMATION SYSTEMS INFRASTRUCTURE AND COORDINATE DATA SYSTEMS TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO SERVICES AND INFORMATION

GoHunt Internet Mapping System (IMS): During the first week of September, the Private Hunting Lands layer was activated on the WDFW web mapping application, GoHunt. This layer shows points representing hunting access site locations for "Feel Free to Hunt," "Hunt with Written Permission," and "Register to Hunt" private lands access agreements. Regional staff reviewed the data for accuracy prior to the information going public. The Private Hunting Lands layer is visible at scales above 1:50,000. Both public and landowner response will be monitored as the hunting season progresses.

WILD, Next Generation License Sales System: Development work on the new WILD project has begun. Most of the initial system design work with the contractor, Outdoor Central, has taken place and the design is in final review. In the next few months, the new Catch Record Card design will be reviewed with the agency Advisory Groups. An aggressive schedule is envisioned with possible implementation of some system elements in the late winter time period.

RECONNECT WITH THOSE INTERESTED IN WASHINGTON'S FISH AND WILDLIFE.

WDFW Web Site News: The agency web site continues to be a major communication channel. Statistics for fiscal year 2005 show that web site usage reached a new high with more than 27 million page hits. The Wild Watch Camera pages alone accounted for 1.3 million hits in April through June. Two new features are being added to the web site to enhance the distribution of agency news items. The first is a list serve capability that will send subscribers news items on a variety of subjects via email. Any citizen can subscribe to a topic on the list. The second is an automated news syndication service that allows other web sites to display WDFW news headlines.

Local High School Students Place Woody Fish Habitat & Spawning Gravel: WDFW staff worked with Washington State University (WSU) Extension service and 8 local high school students (through WSU's 4-H challenge program) to place over 100 stockpiled Christmas trees and over 10 cubic yards of spawning gravel within a recently completed WDFW/Trout Unlimited (TU) salmon & steelhead habitat restoration project on the Entiat River. This was a good experience for the students who were able to participate in

an actual fish habitat restoration project and gain some insight to possible future career choices. We will be utilizing this same program and many of the same students this winter to build several wood duck nest boxes and to conduct native planting work at this and another WDFW/TU salmon & steelhead restoration site on the Entiat River system later this fall or winter.

Local Habitat Biologist Sets State Record For Landowner Incentive Program Grants: Area Habitat Biologist Bill Weiler has worked with landowners and real estate agents in Klickitat and Skamania counties to enroll a record 18 landowners in the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP), for projects to protect sensitive fish and wildlife habitat. He has also used other grant programs to vigorously involve citizens in protecting and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat.

Chimacum Creek Restoration: WDFW employees and volunteers assisted the North Olympic Salmon Coalition to remove an extensive growth of invasive European bittersweet from the Chimacum Creek channel near Port Hadlock, which flows through agency-owned tidelands. The plant, a member of the nightshade group, had grown so dense in some places that it spanned the channel, completely blocking the flow. Bittersweet confounds fish access by growing into the channel, collecting debris, and then growing on the floating mats. Removal of the bittersweet will help provide access to spawning grounds for listed summer chum during recent drought conditions.

Game Workshop: A public game workshop was conducted on Saturday, August 20, 2005, with the main focus of developing options for the 2006-08 hunting seasons. While the meeting received light participation from the public, several options were discussed for ten issues that were priorities for those in the audience. A preliminary summary of priority issues as determined from the web survey was provided and many of those priorities were similar for workshop participants. At this point in the process, a single statewide elk tag, relaxing equipment regulations for archers and muzzleloader hunters, expansion of quality deer and elk hunting opportunities, and a review of antler point restrictions are some of the top priorities.

To date, approximately 1500 citizens have responded and provided their priority issues for department consideration. The Game Division met with regional staff in Okanogan September 6 through September 8, 2005, to identify issues and develop options for the upcoming 3-year hunting season package for 2006-08. Attendance was good and the discussions were helpful and insightful. The meeting included detailed discussions of issues pertaining to the structure of hunting seasons. Efforts in the next several months regarding the planning will include a narrowing of issues, development of options pertaining to those issues, public meetings, compilation of internal and public input, and finally generation of final proposals to be taken to the Commission.